



The History of American Education: 1600-2000

1600s | 1700s | 1800s | 1900s

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1600s



1635

The first public school in the American colonies, Boston Latin School, opens.

1636

Harvard College has its beginnings in a seminary founded by the Great and General Court of Massachussetts at New Towne.

1642

Massachussetts Bay Colony passes the Compulsory Education Law, requiring parents to teach their children to read.

1647

Massachussetts Bay Colony becomes the first to require towns of at least 50 households to hire a teacher to educate the town's children. Towns of 100 families should build public elementary schools.



1661

An evening school for working children is established in New Amsterdam (now New York City.)

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1700s



Adam Smith

1700

Quaker school for black students established in Philadelphia.

1708

John Leverett was the first non-clergy president at Harvard.



John Leverett

1778

The notion of the voucher system is born with famed economist, Adam Smith.

1790

Pennsylvania state constitution calls for free public education for poor families. Wealthy families are expected to pay for their children's schooling.

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1800s

(1800-1850)

1809

The first U.S. parochial school is founded near Baltimore by English-American widow, Elizabeth Ann Seton.

1805

The New York Public School Society is formed by wealthy businessmen to provide education for poor children. Schools are run on the "Lancasterian" model, in which one "master" teaches hundreds of students in a signel room.



1821

Boston's English High School opens with 102 students. The school is the first tuition-free public high school to teach no language but English.

1837

Massachussetts establishes a board of education, naming former educational reformer, Horace Mann, as the first secretary of the Board. His annual salary was $1,000.



1840

Bishop John Hughes asks for state aid for Catholic schools.

1839

Ohio becomes the firs t state to adopt a bilingual education law, allowing for German-English instruction at parents' requests.

1846

Platt Rogers Spencer develops the first widely used handwriting teaching system in schools, called Spencerian penmanship.

1848

The first school for children with mental disabilities opens in Massachusetts.

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1800s

(1851-1899)

1853

The Children's Aid Society of New York implements the first school lunch program.

1852

Massachussetts enacts the first compulsory school-attendance law in the U.S.

1857

The National Teachers Association is formed. The name later changes to National Education Association (NEA).

1860

The NEA announces its support of physical education in public schools.

1863

The NEA announces its support of music education in public schools.

1870

Women enter the University of Michigan for the first time since its founding at Ann Arbor in 1817. By the end of the 1870s, there will be close to 154 U.S. coeducational colleges, up from 24 in 1833.

1873

The board of education in St. Louis, MI establishes the first successful public school kindergarten. It opens in the Des Peres School with 42 students.

1879

A school for Native-American children opens in Carlisle, PA with 147 students.



University of Michigan's Old Medical Building, constructed in 1848-1850.

1897

The National Congress of Mothers is organized in Washington during a meeting attended by 2,000 people. Today, the group is known as the National Parent Teachers Association, or PTA.



Alice McLellan Birney, one of the orginial founders of the PTA, and her three children.

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1900s

(1900-1950)

1907 Maria Montessori opens her first school.



Maria Montessori

1913 A sex education program is introduced citywide in public high schools in Chicago, Illinois.

1917 Congress passes the Smith-Hughes act, allowing funds for vocational education below the college level.

1918 School attendance becomes compulsory in every U.S. state.

1928 The National Education Association's Sixth Yearbook presents guidelines for health education content in schools, including sex hygiene.

1929 Haaren High School in New York offers the first aviation course to students.



1934 Pennsylvania is the first state to establish a driving course for students, creating one at State College High School.

1946 The United States Congress approves the National School Lunch Act of 1946, creating the modern school lunch program.

1948 The School of Performing Arts is the first public high school to specialize in music, dance, theater, and broadcasting. It is a division of the Metropolitan Vocational High School in New York.

1950 Contemporary notion of the voucher system is born in Milton Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom*



Milton Friedman

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1900s

(1951-1975)



1960s

Series of Supreme Court cases dealing with state plans for education aiding religious schools.

1954

The U.S. Supreme Court rules schools segregated by race are unequal and therefore unconstitutional.



1961

The Teacher of the Deaf Act is enacted. It is designed to train teachers to educate sutdents who are hard of hearing or deaf.

1965

Congress passes the Elementary and Secondary Education School Act, providing aid to secondary and primary schools and helping educate poor children.

1966

The School Breakfast Program pilot is launched. It becomes permanent in 1975.

1968

Congress passes the Bilingual Education Act, providing the first funding to encourage schools to incorporate native-language education in their curriculum.



1970

Office of Economic Opportunity launches the first modern voucher experiment.

1975

Congress approves the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, requiring states to provide free education for all children with disabilities.

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1900s (1976-1999)



1976

An expansion of the Emergency School Aid Act (1972) provides federal funding for the planning and implementation of magnet schools.

1979

The U.S. Department of Education is established under the Department of Education Organization Act.

1979

U.S. spending on education reaches $151.5 billion, up from $8.3 billion in 1950.

1980s

Birth of charter schools in Minnesota.

1983

The National Commission on Excellence in Education report “A Nation at Risk” concludes that America’s educational system is so poor that America’s competive future is threatenend, prompting a wave of reforms in schools and teacher education.

1985

The U.S. Supreme Court rules 5-to-4 that public school teachers may not teach in parochial schools.

1988



The Eddie Eagle Safe Program is developed to help parents, teachers, and law enforcement personnel to teach preK-6th graders



1993

The Education Act of 1986 is expanded to mandate biological education about HIV, AIDS, and sexually transmitted diseases in public schools.

1994

Proposition 187 passes in California, making it illegal for children of undocumented immigrants to atten public school.

1996

Children of U.S. baby boomers swell school enrollments to a record 51.7 million students in the fall.



2000

An NCES study reveals that only 31% of new teachers feel "very well prepared" to integrate technology into their curriculum.

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